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Appropriations Committee
Testimony of Jillian Gilchrest, Assistant Policy Director
Connecticut Association for Human Services
RE: Governor's Proposed Budget
Tuesday, February 19, 2013

Good evening Senator Harp, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Jillian Gilchrest and I am the Assistant Policy Director for the Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS). Founded in 1910, CAHS promotes family economic security strategies that empower low-income working families to achieve financial independence.

I am here to oppose the Governor's proposal to consolidate five legislative commissions into the Commission on Citizen Advocacy. This proposal is short sighted and will have negative and long lasting implications for the work of the Commission on Children and the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women and the populations they represent.

CAHS works with the Commission on Children on a variety of initiatives aimed at improving outcomes for children, including grade level reading and our collaborative work together on the Child Poverty and Prevention Council. The Commission's work and partnership has lead to some very important, far reaching policies for children, in particular, legislation to systemize home visitation and School Readiness legislation that makes preschool more accessible to low-income children.

The Commission on Children has a long history of partnering with local and national foundations to bring additional dollars to programming that will benefit children and families in the capital region and across Connecticut. In fact, for each dollar invested in its budget, the Commission on Children brings in more than \$1.45 from federal, foundation, and private sources. These funds do not come to the Commission; rather, they support initiatives at the state and local levels.

Equally as important, the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women is celebrating its 40th year of promoting women's economic security, health and safety, women's leadership, and the elimination of gender discrimination in Connecticut. CAHS and the PCSW work together on policies to improve family economic success and address the consequences of poverty, which disproportionately impact women in Connecticut.



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CAHS applauds the work done by the PCSW, in particular their work on the self sufficiency standard, the income a family in Connecticut would need to make in order to meet their basic expenses, based on geography and number of children. This is an important tool that highlights the true cost of living in Connecticut.

On a personal level, I have benefited from the work that PCSW does to promote women's leadership in Connecticut. As a founding member of the Young Women's Leadership Program (YWLP), a project of the PCSW, I served on the Steering Committee and then as co-chair for five years. This opportunity helped me to develop leadership skills and it also connected me to the more than 300 women between the ages of 18-35 we have as members of the YWLP. The YWLP serves an important purpose--connecting young women from throughout Connecticut in order to foster and promote their leadership on a professional and personal level.

Under the Governor's proposal, much of the amazing work done by both the Commission on Children and the Permanent Commission on the Status of women will be lost. CAHS kindly requests that you oppose this consolidation and continue to fund Commissions that have a proven legacy of promoting the health and well-being of Connecticut's women and children. Thank you for your time.